

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 AGR-05 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00

FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03

SP-02 CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 STR-04 L-03 EA-07

IGA-02 DODE-00 SAB-01 /071 W
----- 092499

P R 111505Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7016

INFO AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

PANCANAL

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SAN JOSE FOR AGATT

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: EPAP EAGR PN

SUBJ: 1976 MEAT IMPORT PROGRAM

1. AGRICULTURAL ATTACHE AND EMBASSY OFFICER MET WITH VICE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, GUSTAVO GONZALEZ, ON MAR 10 FOR INFORMAL DELIVERY OF COPY OF DIPLOMATIC NOTE OUTLINING THE PROPOSED VOLUNTARY RESTRAINT PROGRAM FOR PANAMA. IN PRESENTATION TO VICE-MINISTER, WE EMPHASIZED THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PANAMA OF SHORTFALL REALLOCATIONS WITHIN THE LATIN AMERICAN REGION. VICE-MINISTER REPLIED THAT HE WAS NATURALLY DISAPPOINTED THAT PANAMA'S QUOTA HAD NOT BEEN INCREASED FROM 1975 LEVELS, BUT THAT THE PROPOSED SHORTFALL REALLOCATIONS MIGHT PROVIDE SOME OUTLET FOR THE PANAMANIAN MEAT SURPLUS. HE FEELS THAT AN AGREEMENT ON THE PROPOSED QUOTA LEVEL OF 2.5 MILLION LBS CAN BE REACHED, SINCE THE ALTERNATIVE IS UNILATERAL QUOTA RESTRICTIONS AT A LOWER LEVEL.

2. IN RESPONSE TO OUR QUERY ABOUT POSSIBLE CONTACTS

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WITH EC MEAT IMPORTERS, THE VICE MINISTER SAID

THAT THE ONLY INFORMATION HE HAD RECEIVED WAS FROM THE DEPARTMENT AND THE EMBASSY. HE ALSO INDICATED THAT THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE HAD RECEIVED (FROM THE PANAMANIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON) SUGGESTIONS FROM THE DEPARTMENT THAT CANADA MIGHT BE A POTENTIAL MARKET FOR PANAMANIAN BEEF. HE IS CURRENTLY STAFFING THIS ALTERNATIVE.

3. COMMENT: DOMESTIC CATTLEMEN CONTINUE TO PRESSURE GOP AND MEAT PACKERS ON AUSTRALIAN BEEF LAUNDERING OPERATION AMID UNSUBSTANTIATED REPORTS THAT IMPORTATION OF AUSTRALIAN MEAT FOR PROCESSING AND RE-EXPORT WILL CONTINUE. CURRENT FIGURES INDICATE THAT PANAMA HAS EXPORTED 3.3 MILLION LBS. OF MEAT (2 MILLION AUSTRALIAN, 1.3 MILLION DOMESTIC) TO THE US IN 1976. THE MAJORITY OF THIS MEAT HAS BEEN SUBJECT TO THE QUOTA. GOP FAILURE TO APPROVE PROPOSED VRP QUOTA LEVEL NOW WOULD BE INTERPRETED BY CATTLEMEN AS ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO UNDERMINE THEIR ECONOMIC POSITION. GOP HAS SHOWN RESPONSIVENESS TO THE CATTLEMEN'S COMPLAINTS BY REQUIRING THE TWO MEAT EXPORTERS, KARNE, A.A. AND CENTRAL AMERICAN BEEF COMN TO POST A BOND TOTALLING \$150,000 TO REIMBURSE THE CATTLEMEN FOR DAMAGES CAUSED BY SHIPPING AUSTRALIAN MEAT UNDER PANAMA'S QUOTA. RAFAEL ZUBIETA, EXDCUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE NATIONAL CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION, INFORMS US THAT THE CATTLEMEN WILL USE THIS MONEY TO SUBSIDIZE EXPORTS ON THE HOOF TO OTHER MARKETS, SUCH AS ARUBA.

4. IN ORDER TO CLARIFY CURRENT STATUS OF PANAMANIAN SHIPMENTS UNDER QUOTA, WE REQUEST CURRENT BUREAU OF CUSTOMS DATA ON RECEIPTS OF PANAMANIAN MEAT.
JORDEN

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